

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: November 17, 2016

Agenda Item: Lost River Wildlife Management Area Addition (R6)

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Min

Background

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes the fee-title purchase of approximately 640 acres of property adjacent to the Lost River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Hill County. The acquisition would conserve and protect native habitats and improve access to the wildlife management area and surrounding public lands. The property would be included and managed as part of the Lost River WMA. The appraised value for this property is \$700,000.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

A 30-day public scoping period was held from May 26, 2016 through June 25th, 2016. Following this scoping process, FWP released a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on Aug. 18th and accepted public comment through Sept. 16th. A public informational meeting was held in Havre on Sept. 8, with 29 people in attendance. During the comment period, the EA was available for public review on the FWP website and public notices were placed in both the Great Falls Tribune and Havre Daily News. Notifications of the availability of the EA and opportunity to comments were mailed to neighboring landowners and interested parties. FWP received 38 public comments (28 support, 9 oppose, one neutral).

Alternatives and Analysis

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, acquisition of this parcel by FWP would not occur. The property would remain under current private ownership and management. The parcel could be sold to another private landowner. Native habitats on the property would not be protected. Public accessibility to the west portion of the WMA would remain a challenge.

Proposed Alternative: FWP would proceed with the acquisition process with the intent of purchasing this 640-acre parcel. The parcel would be added to and managed as part of the Lost River WMA. The property would be managed to conserve the native habitats and wildlife populations present. The addition of this parcel would substantially improve public and administrative accessibility to west portion of the WMA as well as surrounding public lands.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends final approval of the acquisition of the Lost River WMA Addition by the Fish and Wildlife Commission. This acquisition would help with conserving native habitats associated with the Milk River, managing the WMA, and providing user access to the WMA and other public lands.

Proposed Motion

I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve this fee-title acquisition as an addition to the Lost River Wildlife Management Area.